

Minutes of the School Committee
Retreat
Superintendent's Conference Room
Date: Wednesday, July 26th, 2017

Committee Present: Dr. Kevin Donahue, Chair, Sheila Varela, Vice Chair, Margaret Eberhardt, Dr. Elaine Craghead, Betty White, Ada Rosmarin.

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent of Schools (arrived late); Dr. Glenn Pavlicek, Assistant Superintendent for Business; Janet Sheehan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources.

Also Present: Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of MASC.

Call to Order

The Chair called the June 26th meeting of the School Committee to order at 2:35pm. He then introduced Mr. Koocher and thanked him for coming.

Topic One: MASC Executive Director Glenn Koocher. Mr. Koocher showed a poster board of last year's goals. He asked School Committee members if last year's goals proved to be valuable during the year and was told that they were.

Topic Two: School Committee Goals. Ms. Eberhardt said progress has been made in the Social Emotional Learning goal. Ms. Varela agreed. Ms. Sheehan noted that Ms. Stillman put together a needs assessment profile. As part of this process, Ms. Stillman interviewed principals, etc. about their needs and inventoried the resources in the district. Ms. Varela said the metrics are important, but SEL is equally important. She thinks if the district has the resources, we should keep an SEL facilitator in the district.

Mr. Koocher noted that, regarding proficiency gaps, this was an important topic. Mr. Koocher asked how that went. Data will not be available for a few months, but with what's available, how did you do? Ms. Sheehan said that data from last year showed that gaps were closing, more in ELA than math. At elementary, while the gap closed somewhat, the percentage of students reading at grade level is too low. Ms. Sheehan noted that the district conducted a curriculum review and subsequently adopted a new literacy curriculum as of fall of 2017.

Mr. Koocher asked about differentiated instruction, and noted the committee had some very ambitious thoughts about this. How did it go? Ms. Varela said she heard from parents and students that in 9th and 10th grades, indicating there was a belief that there is too much of a leap between college prep and honors levels. In those grades, the honors classes are rigorous and prepare for students AP. But if these students have trouble and drop down to college prep, then it's too easy. Ms. Varela suggested "Honors 1" and "Honors 2" -- to offer more classes with high-achieving students. There is a similar system at Pierce. Ms. Eberhardt said MHS is a very AP-driven high school, for better or worse. Dr. Donahue said there's a similar situation at elementary. Strong readers are not necessarily encouraged. The focus is on getting the weaker readers up to speed. Dr. Craghead agreed. Ms. Eberhardt said that differentiated instruction is

very important. How do we get teachers to get better at differentiated learning? Mr. Koocher asked, going forward, would this committee want to revise, or keep this goal on the agenda? Ms. Eberhardt said the goal should be to support teachers to be able to differentiate. Ms. Varela talked about "spreading the wealth," for on-point students. Ms. Rosmarin said that SEL and cultural competency and differentiated instruction are all linked. Mr. Koocher said there is a document which lists the steps taken throughout the year. It's hard to assess this in a single year, since this is a multi-year goal. Are all these steps being taken because of the goal, or are they because that's what high-performing districts do? He said, in high performing districts, we look at these things and say, let's keep it up, or put the brakes on it. Ms. Varela said most colleges ask about AP and honors courses, plus leadership roles. Ms. Sheehan noted that Mr. Jette has been working very hard with teachers to employ differentiated instructions. Dr. Donahue noted that at the elementary level, regarding the French/English divide, parents of French Immersion students tend to be satisfied, because at the very least, they're learning French. Let's not perpetuate the divide between the two programs.

Mr. Koocher asked, regarding the goal of teachers of color, the goal was 15%. How are you doing? Systemwide, the teaching staff of color is 9% in Milton. Ms. Varela asked what is being done to encourage students of color to enter the teaching profession. She asked, why don't colleges give scholarships to students of color who agree to go into teaching?

Mr. Koocher said that general consensus is that K-12 is over regulated, but this is not true of higher education. Any time folks try to push higher ed in any direction, it tends to backfire. Mr. Koocher said that many districts are not even thinking about diversity. Ms. Varela asked what other districts are as high performing as Milton with the same diverse make up. Mr. Koocher said in other districts, their idea of diversity is high-income, low-income. In Cambridge, when you recruit highly-skilled minority educators, they become targets of recruitment from other communities. Ms. Varela said the staff diversity should always be a goal. The group discussed the level of family participation in after school or evening meetings. Most people are busy during the day. At the end of the day, people aren't coming to evening meetings. Pure enrichment does not bring people out anymore. One goal could be to get the community deeply involved. 35 years ago, PTO meetings were well attended. Ms. Varela said they are still well attended in Milton, but perhaps could do better.

Regarding athletic participation, 30% of athletes are students of color. Ms. Gormley noted that the School Committee and MHS have identified certain sports where students are underrepresented. Dr. Craghead said she would like to see the actual numbers and percentages. Mr. Koocher asked if we are looking at participation in music, drama and other extracurriculars and was told that we are.

Digital Technology: Dr. Craghead said, we should look at what we got in the override and link these goals to those positions. Show positive results from the creation of these new positions. Ms. Eberhardt wants to know what the plan is. How do we use technology, what do we do? Ms. Sheehan said there is a document which relates to this in the packet. It shows where teachers need to integrate technology. This is a standard that will be met. Let's move forward and have the new technology director report out once a quarter. Ms. Eberhardt hope that the overall strategy to incorporate technology into the curriculum. Ms. Rosmarin said this is a big issue on

the Strategic Planning Subcommittee. Ms. Varela thinks it would be good to utilize the new technology teacher.

Mr. Koocher noted the Superintendent's Goals. They are linked to the School Committee goals set a year ago. In most districts that perform annual goal setting, usually one or two fall off, and one or two are added. Either fine-tuned or eliminated. Mr. Koocher asked, are there any goals you would like to add, or work on? Ms. Rosmarin said that the Strategic Planning Committee's goals are not synchronized with the School Committee goals. Ms. Varela felt that the Strategic Planning Subcommittee goals are the jumping off point for the School Committee. Ms. Rosmarin said, as a caveat, this subcommittee report won't be complete until October. The timing of this is off.

Dr. Donahue noted that the mid-cycle review of the Superintendent will be this fall. Ms. Rosmarin said she would go through the Strategic Planning Subcommittee report (attachment). She would like to involve as many people as possible but still keep it moving forward, being sensitive to the rhythms of the school year. This coming year will be smoother on this point. Progress was identified three key goals.

- School System Description/Data Initiatives
- Core Beliefs & Goals and Three Current Initiatives
- Environmental & Technology

Ms. Rosmarin continued to outline the Sample Initiative Map (see the packet for more info).

Dr. Craghead asked, does the Strategic Planning Subcommittee come up with goals for the entire School Committee that we then vote on? Ms. Rosmarin said that was her initial thought. Ms. Varela said she thought the same thing. Dr. Donahue said that's the goal, but it's not ready for this year. Next summer, let's do it. Dr. Craghead said it's a little strange to hear that the Strategic Planning Subcommittee is a piece of us. Ms. Eberhardt said this is a very frustrating process. They speak a language that doesn't make sense. Ms. Eberhardt explained how this subcommittee has struggled its way through. She said it has stalled. Ms. Varela asked, can a parent co-chair a school committee subcommittee? Most agreed that it was okay. Dr. Craghead said this Strategic Planning Subcommittee is loaded with many different people. Our goals are our goals. What's going to drive our goals is this Strategic Planning Subcommittee. Dr. Donahue said this document will cross multiple levels. It will filter down to all. Dr. Craghead asked, is this a year to year thing? Is this a five-year plan? Or will we introduce new ones every year? Ms. Gormley said these have to be issues important to the School Committee. There need to be regular temperature checks. Ms. Sheehan said she attended a meeting, but her concern is that there is nothing about student achievement. There is no end game defined. Maybe the School Committee goals should come first. Mr. Koocher said in Ada's sample, they seemed to parallel the School Committee goals. Ms. Varela said that because of all that occurred last year, should this committee not present in October? Ms. Eberhardt said we've wasted a lot of time -- I was thinking this would be a long term, five-year plan. Either you dissolve the whole idea, or you do something with the work that's been done. Ms. Varela would like for this to be five-year goals. Ms. Gormley said the good news is that the social emotional learning is on this list. But they're not syncing together this year. Dr. Craghead and Ms. Eberhardt said, it feels like it's limiting

what the School Committee can do with our goals. What's the point if they're not working in concert with each other? Ms. Varela thinks we need feedback from parents and department heads, etc.

Mr. Koocher said the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee are advisory to the School Committee. Mr. Koocher said as long as there's a good faith effort to represent the interests of the School Committee. He advised that the Strategic Planning Subcommittee could put five year goals in draft form.

Dr. Pavlicek asked, what key goals are at risk of not being included? Dr. Donahue said space issues are concern. Ms. Rosmarin said if we want to hold off on making final decisions until October that would help to synchronize the subcommittee's work and our work. But if we want to do this now, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee needs to work so that the product informs the school committee. Ms. Eberhardt asked, is this a long-term committee? Is it like health and wellness? Ms. Varela said she thought this was a long term committee and a long term goal? Originally, Mr. Zullas conceived it as a group who could set long term goals. Dr. Pavlicek said there was a Long Term Planning Committee back in the early 2000s with Beirne Lovely. Ms. Gormley said she thinks the Advancement Initiatives were a huge success. Ms. Varela does not want to wait until October to do the goals. She suggested they close this out in October and report back to us. Dr. Donahue said they should report 4-6 times per year. Every other month? Ada said the Strategic Planning Subcommittee will take priority on whatever comes out of here today. Ms. Varela said if the Strategic Planning Subcommittee reports four times a year, the full School Committee could redirect them.

Ms. Eberhardt said the School Committee has too many branches out. This Strategic Planning Subcommittee, for example. Also, inclusion task force did not report. Health and Wellness did not report that often. We are not that coordinated with our subcommittees. We need the info from these subcommittees regularly. Finance is the only one that really reports back. Subcommittee reports are not detailed, but we will have detailed reports and minutes now. Ms. Eberhardt said this needs to be one of our goals.

Mr. Koocher: The goal for the committee is to deal with its agenda and minutes, which detail info, and are shared.

Dr. Donahue said that during the override, there was lots of talk about transparency. The reporting in the Milton Times is filtered. Dr. Donahue asked if we need to communicate better in a more open way and organize the info that's coming to us.

Dr. Craghead would like to start with the new teacher openings. If we're at 8 to 9% of teachers of color now, and we have about 1/3 of our students who are students of color, either keep the goal, or massage it, but we need that to carry over. Ms. Gormley said we should come up with proposals on that point. Ms. Gormley said the minority job fair last year was very successful and plans to do this again. Ms. Gormley will bring a proposal regarding diversity of staff goal.

Ms. Varela said we should keep the Social Emotional Learning Goal. Dr. Craghead and Ms. White agreed. Ms. Eberhardt said you don't speak about education without talking about SEL.

Ms. Varela suggested adding "Implement and assess" into this goal. Ms. Eberhardt talked about the Take 5 room, the Second Step program as achievements. She said they could work on parent piece.

Dr. Craghead said we still need to work on proficiency gaps, "especially math." Ms. Eberhardt said we did hire math coaches. They restructured some of the superstar math teachers like Mary Shapiro. The district implemented the Calculus Project at the High School. Ms. Varela said we can evaluate the success of literacy program and the addition of two math coaches.

Increase the number of students who read at proficient level by third grade.

Dr. Donahue assigned each School Committee member a goal to write a follows:

1. SEL (Betty White)
2. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (Dr. Donahue)
 DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
 ACHIEVEMENT GAP
 CULTURAL COMPETENCY
3. DIVERSITY OF FACULY (Dr. Craghead)
4. ATHLETIC & EXTRACURRICULAR PARTICIPATION - K-12. (Dr. Craghead)
5. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY (Ms. Eberhardt)
6. SPACE ISSUES (Ms. Varela and Ms. Rosmarin)
7. BOARD OPERATIONS/PROTOCOLS - contact with subcommittees & regular reports- (Dr. Donahue)

Ms. Eberhardt talked about the Cunningham program, where they implemented Reading about Diversity (RAD) Ms. Eberhardt suggested making a checklist for an inclusive classroom. Ms. Varela talked about the differentiated instruction methods at the high school. Ms. Gormley talked about how it works. It's like a co-taught classroom with varying levels of ability.

Dr. Donahue asked, how does one teacher with 26 kids in the class, teach them all? Ms. Varela asked, will the kids who drop from honors to college prep continue to be challenged?

Mr. Koocher asked if there were any other major issues to add.

Ms. Varela asked how to track students of color in the music program, since some occurs during school hours. She also, asked for the Digital Technology task force to give quarterly updates.

Ms. Eberhardt said that next year, there will be no elementary art and music rooms, and the public might ask why we didn't mention it during the override. Dr. Craghead said we have to talk about it in public. Ms. Varela said this is not our fault, but we need to let people know about this.

Dr. Craghead said under Operations, we should have non-overloaded agendas. There should be an effort to end meetings before 10pm. Dr. Donahue wants all Site Councils to present in the fall. Ms. Eberhardt said under board operations/protocol, we should avoid introducing certain topics after a certain time. No 35-page Power Points.

Mr. Koocher talked about how to develop these goals. Present School Committee with a draft, based on info provided. Each person could write the goal. Somebody submit what they have to an aggregator. Put them in a format to make them consistent. Send the goals to the chair. There should be a draft by August. Supply the goals to the chair in a format that he can cut and paste. Deadline is August 11th.

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn.

Move: Dr. Donahue

Second: Ms. Varela

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

The Next School Committee meeting is scheduled for August 23rd.